US 20060233417A1

(19) United States

(12) Patent Application Publication (10) Pub. No.: US 2006/0233417 A1

Steere et al. (43) Pub. Date: Oct. 19, 2006

(54) ELECTRO-DYNAMIC PLANAR LOUDSPEAKER

(76) Inventors: **John F. Steere**, Martinsville, IN (US); **Hans-Juergen Regl**, Regensburg (DE); **Steven W. Hutt**, Bloomington, IN (US)

Correspondence Address:
PAULEY PETERSEN & ERICKSON
2800 W. HIGGINS ROAD
SUITE 365
HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL 60195 (US)

(21) Appl. No.: **11/405,856**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 18, 2006**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/672,741, filed on Apr. 19, 2005.

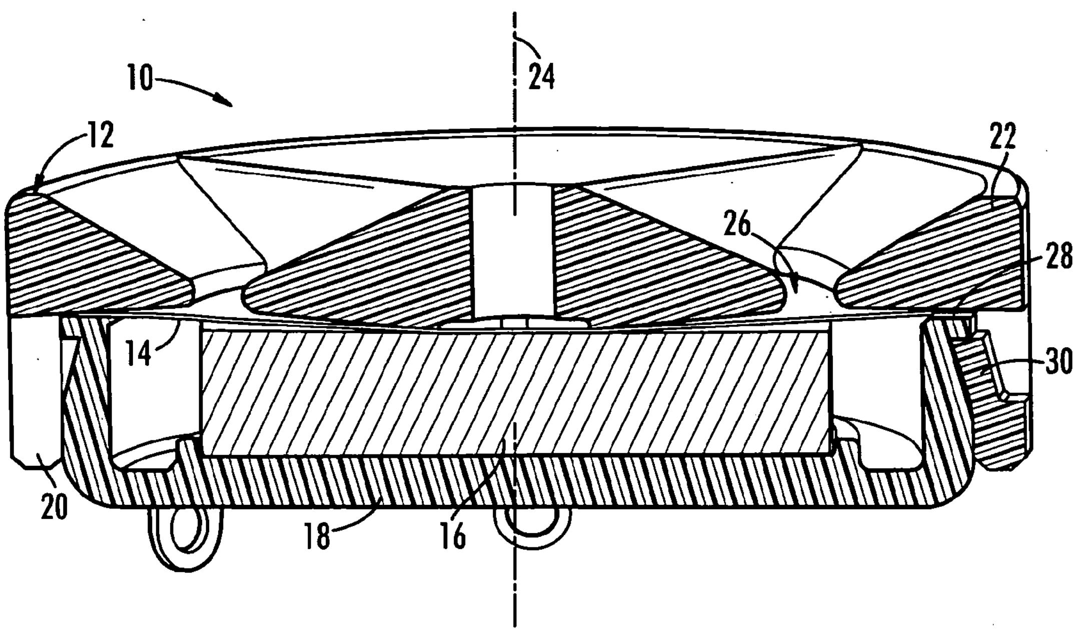
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04R 1/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **381/409**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A planar loudspeaker includes a shell pot, a magnet, a diaphragm, and a face plate. The magnet may be positioned in a cavity in the shell pot. The diaphragm may be coupled with the shell pot to cover an entrance to the cavity. The shell pot may include a conductive path having an inner contact proximate the central axis of the diaphragm, and an outer contact proximate to a perimeter of the diaphragm. The face plate may be coupled with the shell pot so that the diaphragm is positioned between the magnet and the faceplate. The face plate may include an inner terminal and an outer terminal that are aligned to be in direct contact with the respective inner contact and the outer contact of the diaphragm and form an electrical connection there between when the face plate is coupled with the shell pot. The inner and outer terminals may be coupled with a source of electrical signals, such as an audio amplifier. The face plate may also include a raised surface that deflects the diaphragm into a predetermined shape when the face plate is coupled with the shell pot.



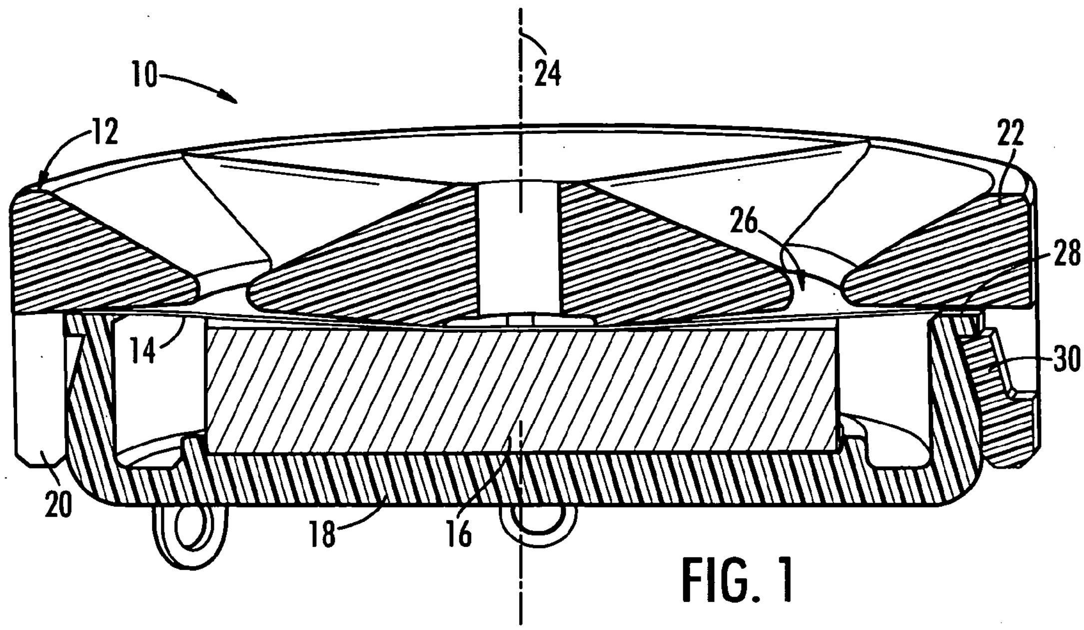


FIG. 1

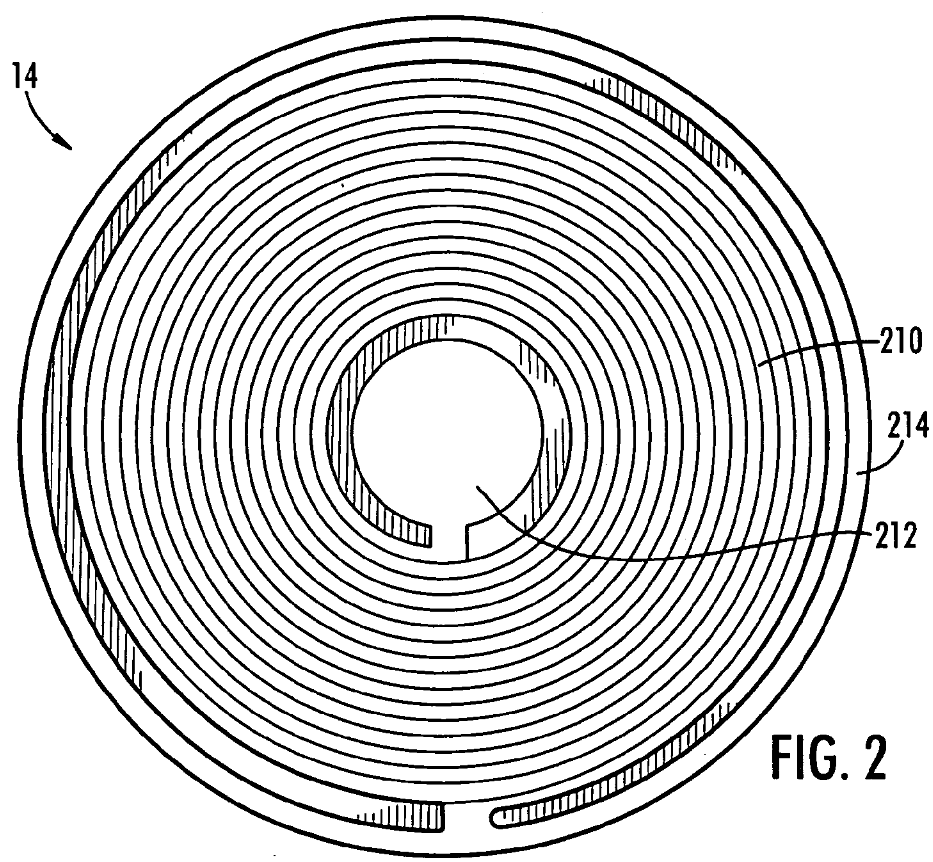


FIG. 2

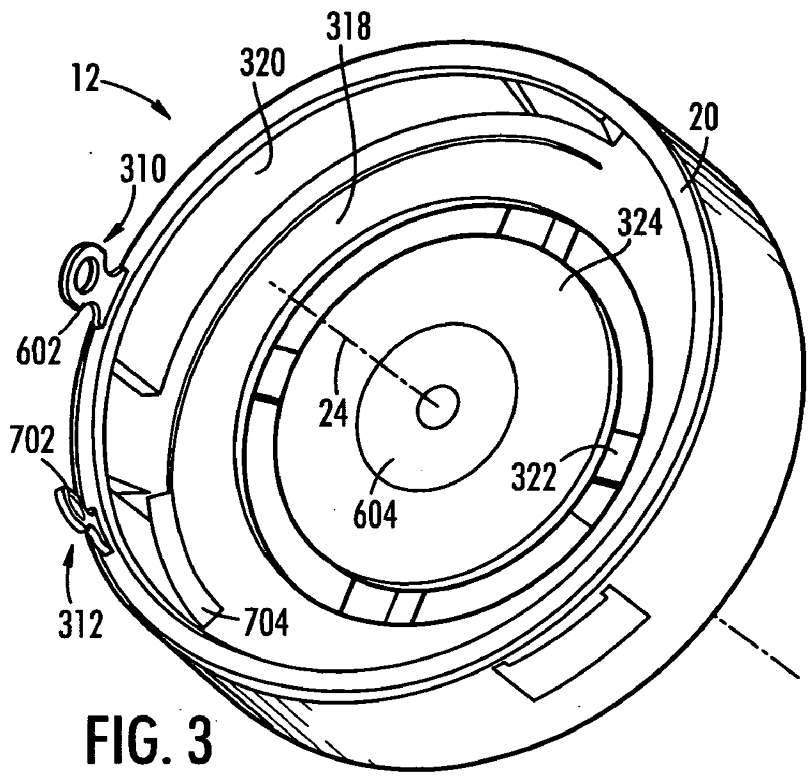

12
320
318
20
310
324
602
24
702
322
604
312
704

FIG. 3

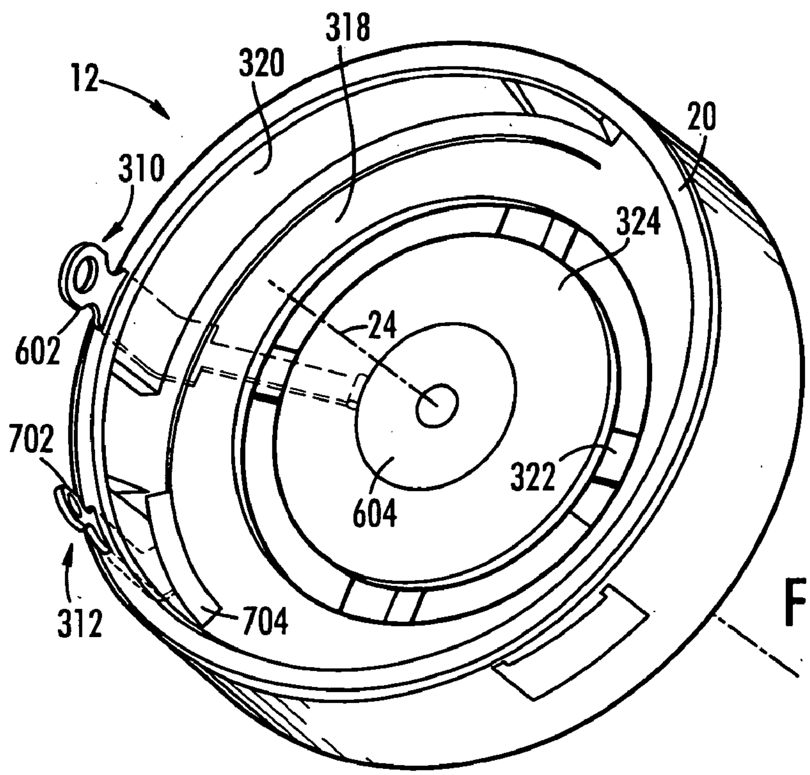

12
320
318
20
310
324
602
24
702
322
604
312
704

FIG. 4

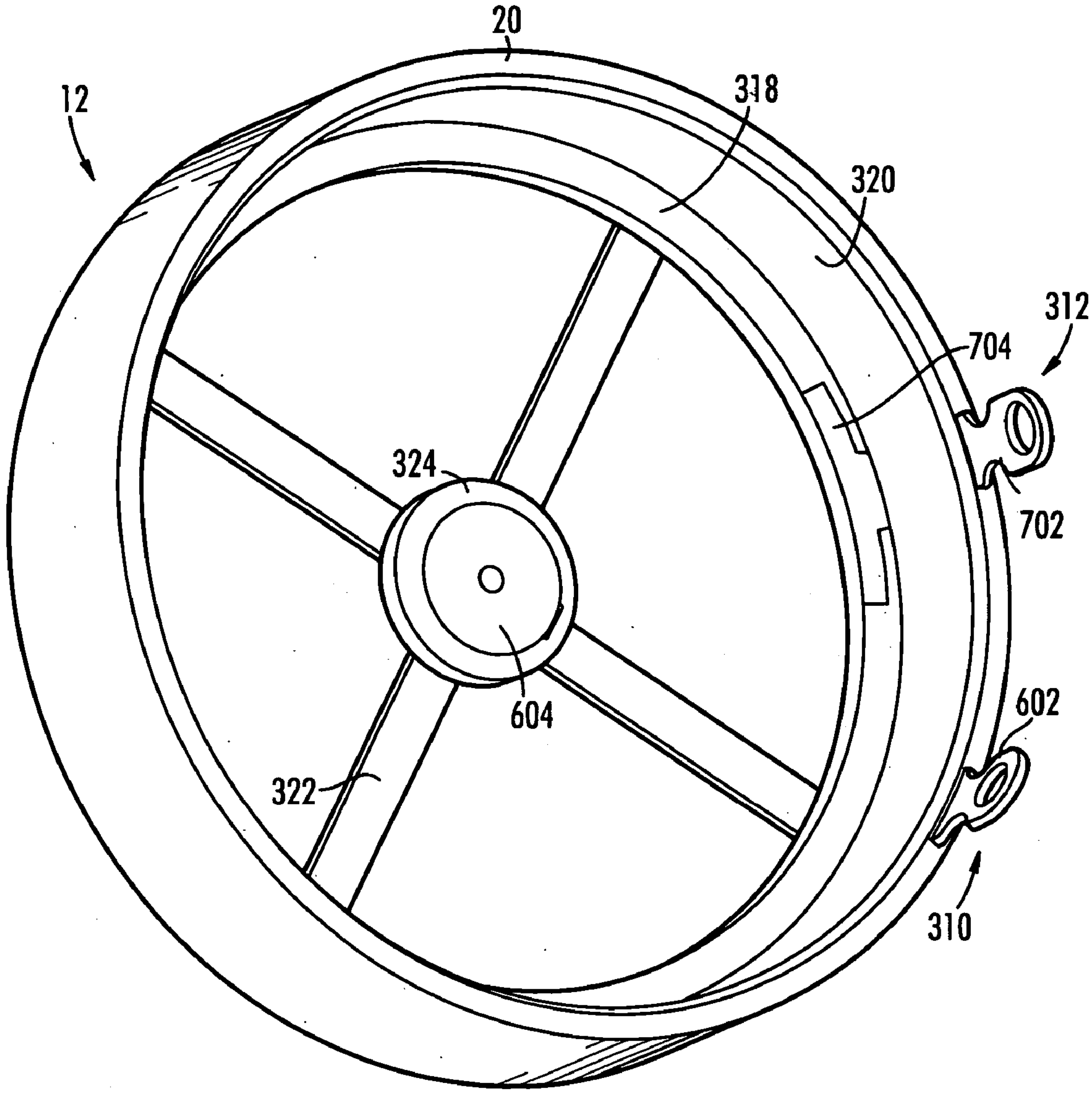


FIG. 5

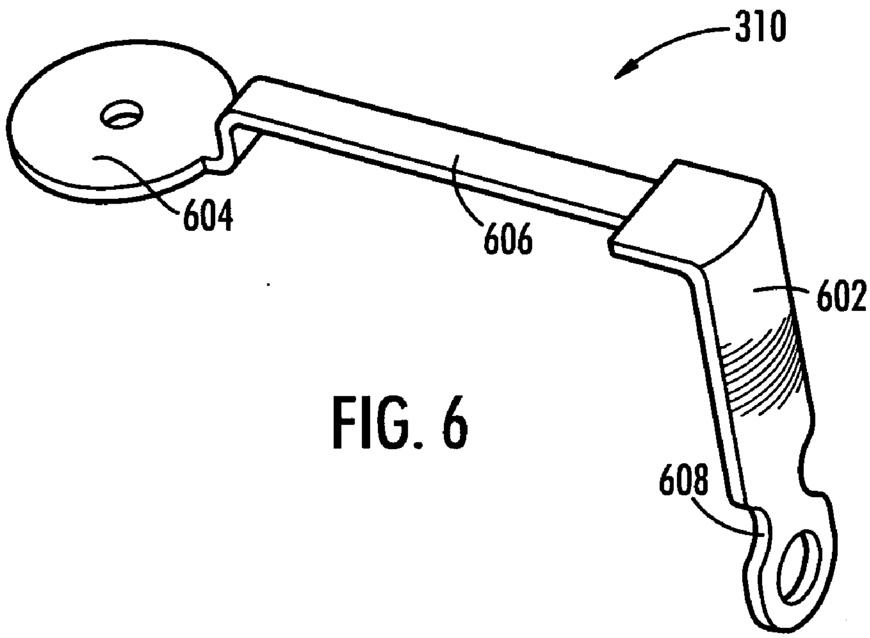


FIG. 6

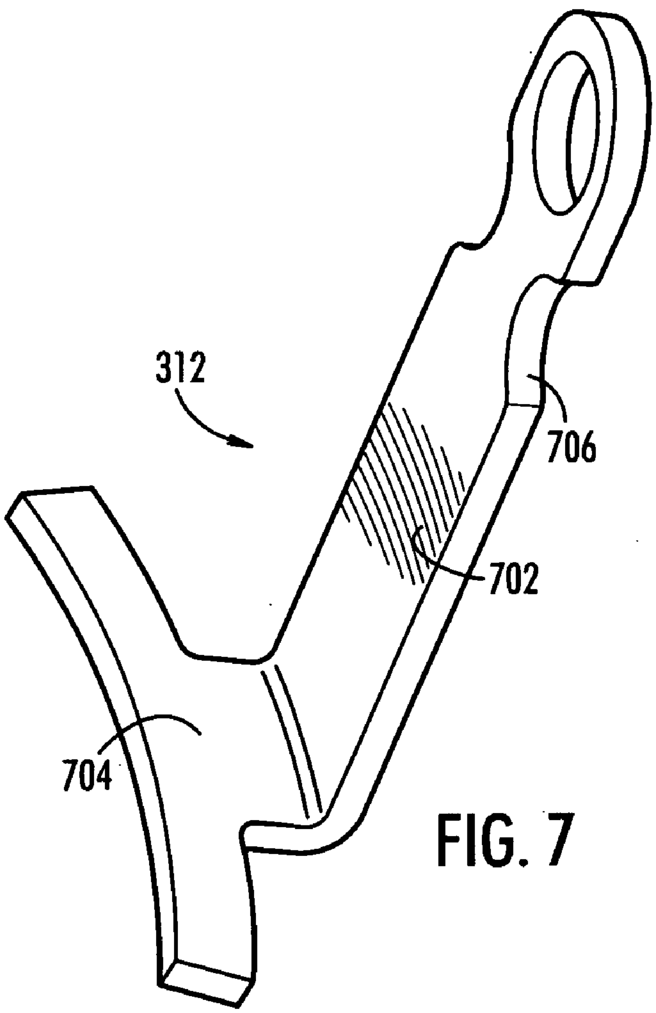


FIG. 7

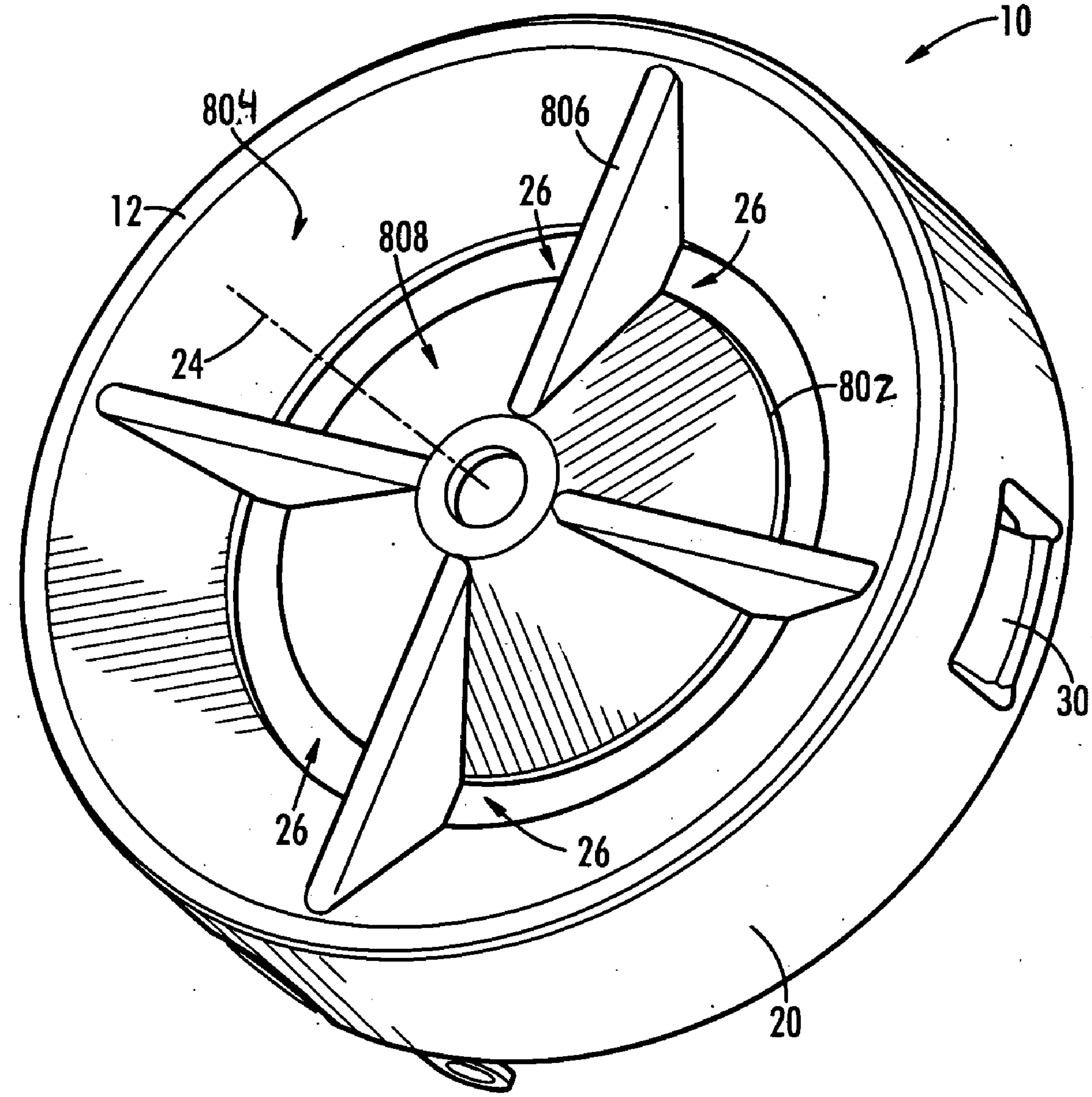


FIG. 8

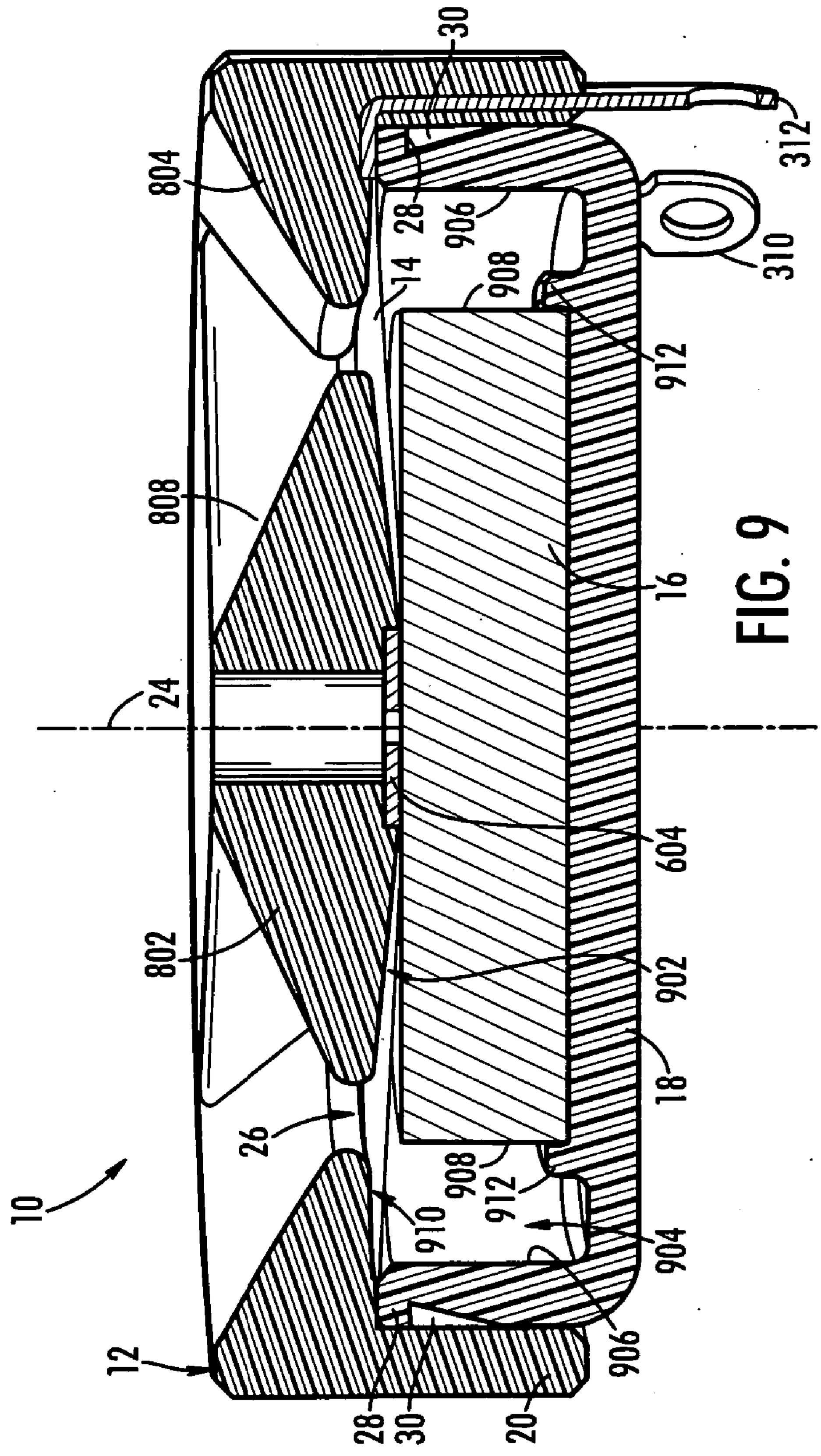

30
312
804
28
906
310
14
908
912
808
16
24
604
802
902
18
26
908
912
10
910
912
904
906
12
28
30
20

FIG. 9

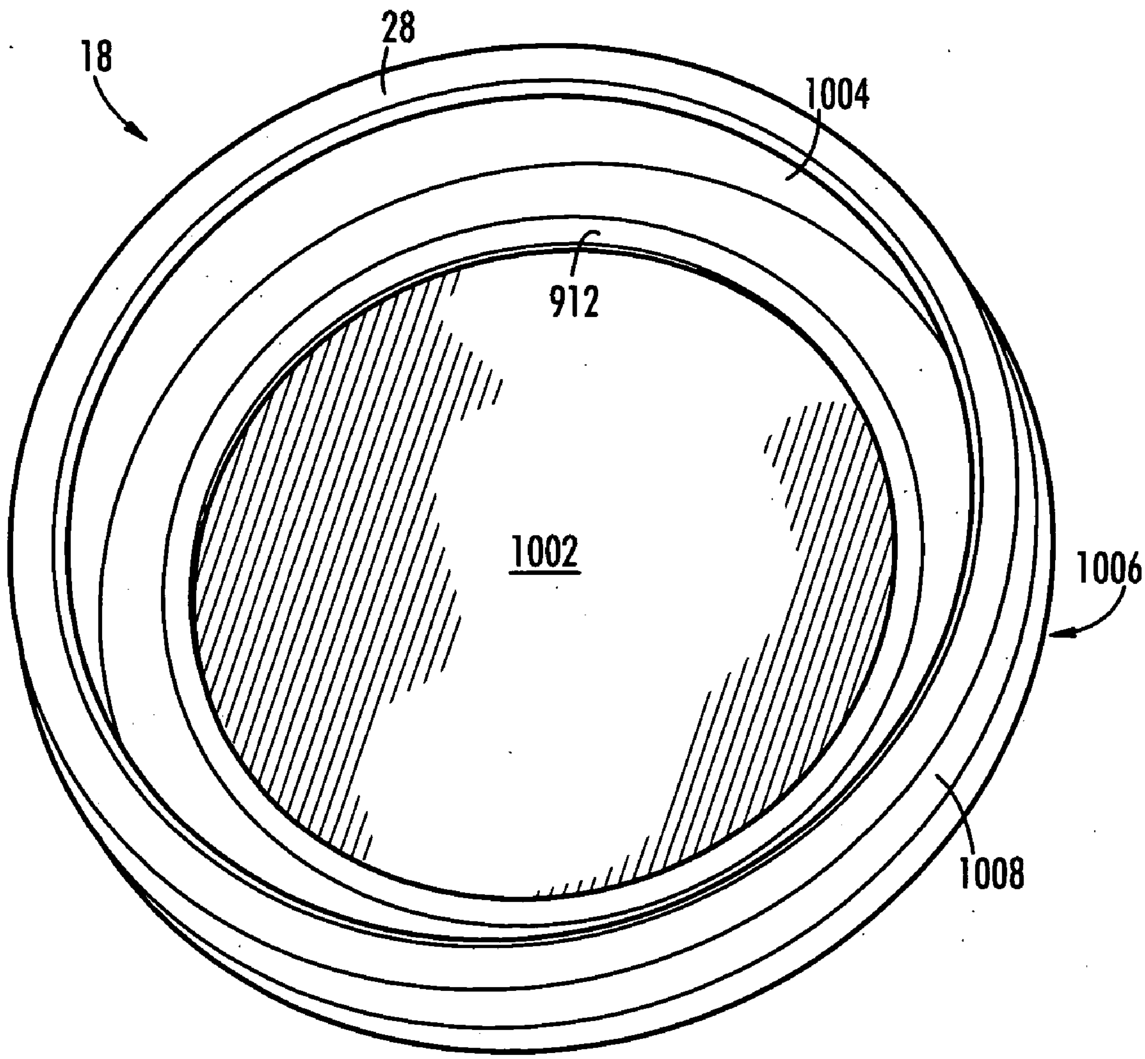


FIG. 10

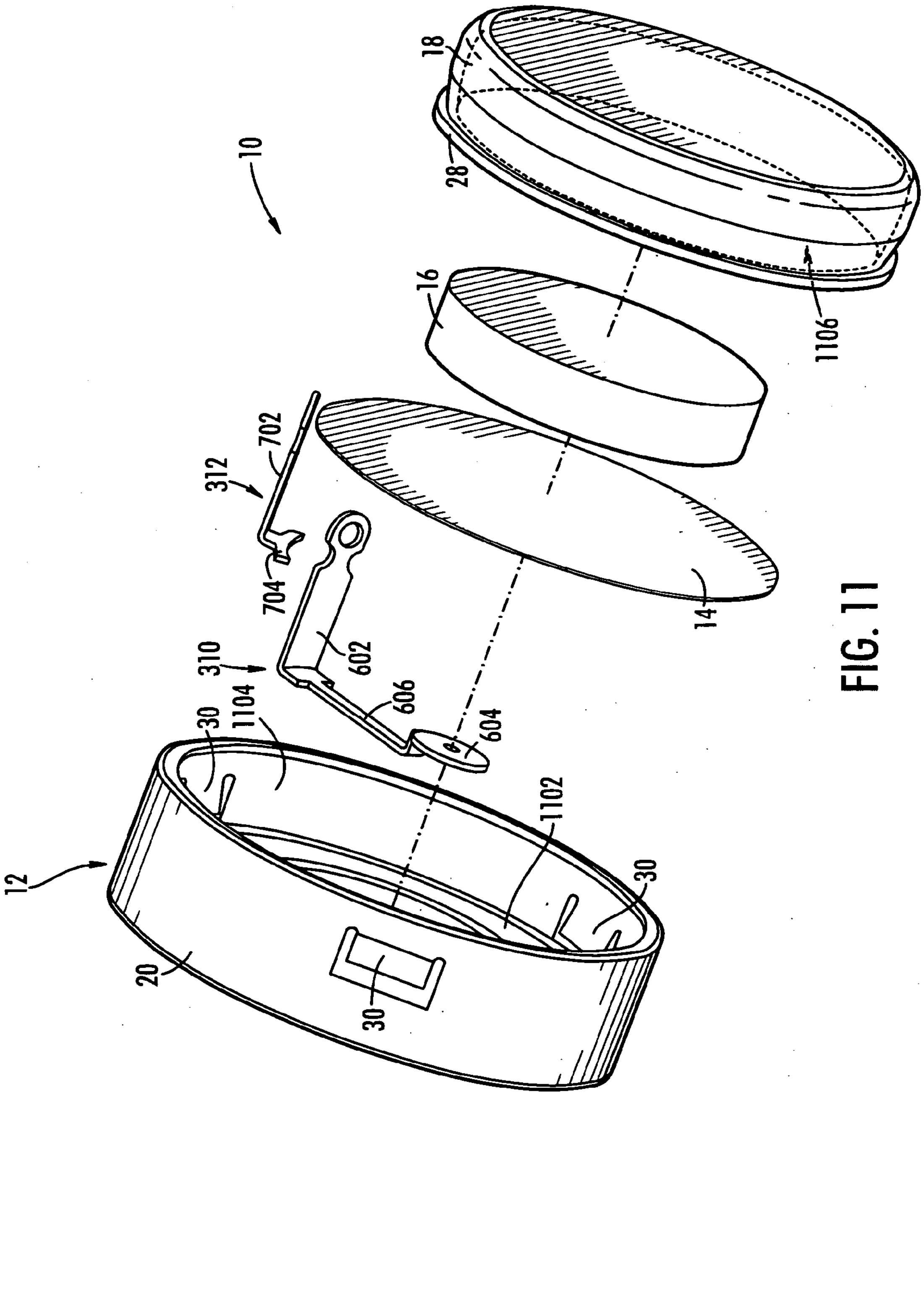

10
18
28
1106
16
702
312
704
14
310
602
606
604
30
1104
1102
12
20
30
30

FIG. 11

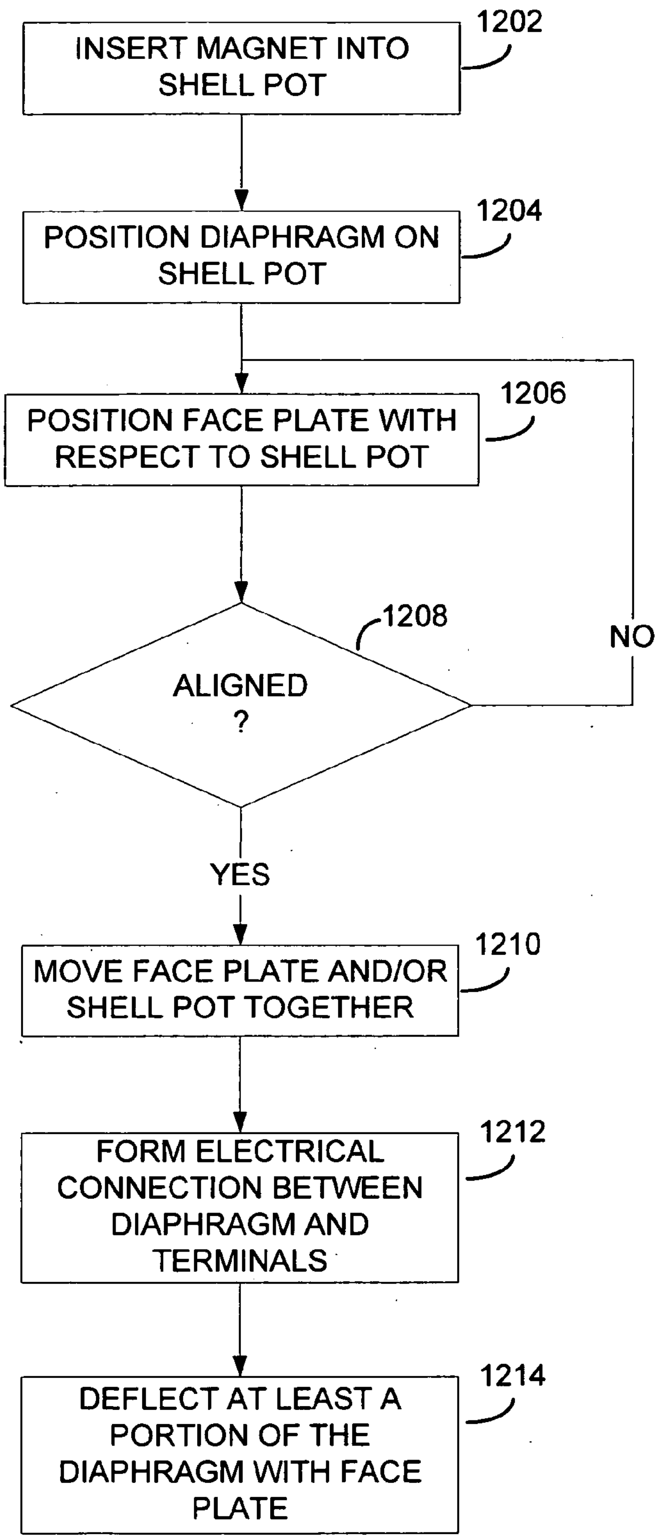

INSERT MAGNET INTO SHELL POT
1202
POSITION DIAPHRAGM ON SHELL POT
1204
POSITION FACE PLATE WITH RESPECT TO SHELL POT
1206
ALIGNED ?
1208
NO
YES
MOVE FACE PLATE AND/OR SHELL POT TOGETHER
1210
FORM ELECTRICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN DIAPHRAGM AND TERMINALS
1212
DEFLECT AT LEAST A PORTION OF THE DIAPHRAGM WITH FACE PLATE
1214

FIG. 12

ELECTRO-DYNAMIC PLANAR LOUDSPEAKER

PRIORITY CLAIM

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/672,741, filed on Apr. 19, 2005, which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Technical Field

[0003] The present invention relates to loudspeakers, and more particularly, to electro-dynamic planar loudspeakers and related manufacturing methods.

[0004] 2. Related Art

[0005] In the field of planar loudspeakers, a diaphragm in the form of a thin film is attached in tension to a frame. A conductive path may be formed on the surface of the diaphragm. An electrical signal, such as an audio signal, may be applied to the conductive path. A magnet may be mounted proximate to the diaphragm such that the electrical signal applied to the conductive path causes the diaphragm to interact with the magnetic field. This interaction can cause the diaphragm to vibrate, thereby producing sound.

[0006] Planar speakers can present many types of manufacturing challenges. Typically, a pair of jumper wires is used to connect the conductive path on the surface of the diaphragm to terminals that serve as inputs for the electrical signal. However, the assembly of loudspeakers with these small wires is difficult and adds to the manufacturing cost. Additionally, a solder may be used to provide an electrical connection between the conductive path and the terminals, which may add to the assembly cost. Moreover, the use of solder connections and associated heating used to form these connections may have adverse effects on plastic components included in the loudspeaker.

[0007] In some cases, the conductive path is fabricated from aluminum, which can cause additional difficulties. An aluminum conductor may require the use of solders with a corrosive flux to break through the aluminum oxide on the surface of the conductive path before the solder joint can be formed. Residual corrosive flux is then neutralized or removed to prevent future corrosion.

[0008] Additionally, mechanical standoffs may be inserted between the magnet and diaphragm of a planar speaker to provide sufficient clearance for the diaphragm to vibrate. The mechanical standoffs add to the number of components and steps required to assemble the loudspeaker, which can increase the cost of assembly.

[0009] Therefore, a need exists for an improved planar loudspeaker that overcomes the aforementioned difficulties.

SUMMARY

[0010] A planar loudspeaker includes a magnet disposed in a cavity formed in a shell pot. A diaphragm may be positioned to cover an entrance to the cavity such that a conductive path formed on the diaphragm is positioned in a magnetic field produced by the magnet. The planar loudspeaker also includes a face plate coupled with the shell pot. The face plate may include terminals that form a direct electrical connection with the conductive path formed on the diaphragm. Audio signals may be supplied from an audio source to the terminals in order to vibrate the diaphragm in the presence of the magnetic field to produce sound.

[0011] A direct connection between the terminals and the conductive path of the diaphragm eliminates the use of jumper wires, such as litz wires, along with the attendant complexities of assembling the loudspeaker to electrically connect the small jumper wires to terminals. Accordingly, the loudspeaker may be assembled in a relatively simple manner and with fewer components required to complete assembly. Further, the use of solder to make electrical connection to the loudspeaker also may be eliminated. This removes the difficulties of using solder in conjunction with plastic components, as well as environmental and corrosion issues that may be associated with the use of solder.

[0012] Some loudspeakers may also be configured without mechanical standoffs, such as spacers, between the diaphragm and magnet. Instead of using mechanical standoffs, the diaphragm may be placed in tension such that the diaphragm is maintained in a determined shape, such as a substantially conical shape. The tension under which the diaphragm is placed also may reduce distortion.

[0013] Other systems, methods, features and advantages of the invention will be, or will become, apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, features and advantages be included within this description, be within the scope of the invention, and be protected by the following claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] The invention can be better understood with reference to the following drawings and description. The components in the figures are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention.

[0015] **FIG. 1** is a side, cross-sectional view of an example planar loudspeaker.

[0016] **FIG. 2** is a top view of an example diaphragm that may be used in the loudspeaker of **FIG. 1**.

[0017] **FIG. 3** is a bottom, perspective view of the face plate shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0018] **FIG. 4** is a bottom, perspective view of the face plate of **FIG. 3** showing an example position of the inner terminal and outer terminal.

[0019] **FIG. 5** is a bottom, perspective view of an example face plate with a phase plug.

[0020] **FIG. 6** is a perspective view of an example inner terminal that may be used in the loudspeaker of **FIG. 1**.

[0021] **FIG. 7** is a perspective view of an example outer terminal that may be used in the loudspeaker of **FIG. 1**.

[0022] **FIG. 8** is a top, perspective view of an example face plate with a phase plug that may be used in the loudspeaker of **FIG. 1**.

[0023] **FIG. 9** is a side, cross-sectional view of an example planar loudspeaker.

[0024] **FIG. 10** is a top, perspective view of a shell pot that may be used in the loudspeaker of **FIGS. 1 and 9**.

[0025] **FIG. 11** is an exploded view of an example planar loudspeaker.

[0026] **FIG. 12** is an example method of manufacture of the planar loudspeakers of **FIGS. 1-11**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0027] **FIG. 1** is an example loudspeaker **10** with a face plate **12**, a vibrating diaphragm **14**, a magnet **16** and a shell pot **18**. The loudspeaker **10** may be a planar type loudspeaker of any size and/or operating frequency range. A planar loudspeaker refers to a loudspeaker with a flat or almost flat diaphragm that may also include a waveguide. In a planar loudspeaker, the acoustic wave emanating from the vibrating flat diaphragm may be a plane wave. Thus, the wave may appear to have the same amplitude everywhere on a plane perpendicular to a direction of travel of the wave.

[0028] The faceplate **12** may be made of a semi-rigid yet flexible material, such as plastic. In one example, the faceplate **12** may be formed by injection molding using a mold. The face plate **12** may include an annular wall **20** extending around the perimeter of a base wall **22**. The shell pot **18** may form a cavity that may be dimensioned to receive the magnet **16**. In the example shown, the face plate **12**, the vibrating diaphragm **14**, the magnet **16** and the shell pot **18** are generally circular in shape and concentric with a central axis **24**. In other examples, the loudspeaker **10** and associated components may have other geometric configurations, such as substantially oval, substantially rectangular, substantially square or any other suitable shape. The face plate **12** may have a radiating opening **26** proximate to the vibrating diaphragm **14** that may direct sound waves emanated from the loudspeaker **10**.

[0029] The face plate **12** may be coupled with the shell pot **18** to form a cover over the cavity formed in the shell pot **18**. In the example shown, the shell pot **18** has a rim **28** that can engage a clip **30** on an annular wall **20** of the face plate **12** when the face plate **12** is pressed on to the shell pot **18**. The face plate **12** may have one or more clips **30** that engage with the shell pot **18**. For example, the face plate **12** may include three integral clips **30**. In other examples, any number of clips **30** may be included to securely engage the face plate **12** with the shell pot **18**. This arrangement allows a rigid attachment between the shell pot **18** and the face plate **12** without the use of adhesive or external fasteners, such as rivets or screws. In other examples, however, the face plate **12** may be connected to the shell pot **18** using adhesive or external fasteners, such as screws, clamps, or rivets. In other examples, the face plate **12** may attach to the shell pot **18** using a friction fit, a threaded connection, or any other mechanism that provides for a secure and substantially rigid engagement of the face plate **12** with the shell pot **18**.

[0030] **FIG. 2** illustrates an example diaphragm **14**. The diaphragm **14** may be a film or any other flexible material capable of being vibrated to produce sound. The diaphragm **14** may form a planar surface positioned in the loudspeaker **10** proximate to a magnetic field created by the magnet **16** (**FIG. 1**). A conductive path **210** may be formed in or on the top and/or bottom of the diaphragm **14**. The conductive path **210** may be formed as a substantially spiral path as shown in **FIG. 2**. The conductive path **210** could also be formed using other routes and/or patterns that enable an electromagnetic field of the magnet **16** to intersect and interact with the conductive path **210**, and cause vibrational movement of the diaphragm **14**. The conductive path **210** may be formed on the diaphragm **14** by etching a conductive path on the diaphragm, depositing a conductive material on a film or using any other techniques for forming conductive substrates on a film. In addition, or alternatively, the conductive path **210** may be formed in the diaphragm **14** as part of the diaphragm manufacturing process.

[0031] The conductive path **210** may include an inner contact **212** and an outer contact **214**. The inner contact and outer contacts **212** and **214** may be used as input or output conducting surfaces for transmitting an electrical signal across the conductive path **210**. The inner contact **212** may be a conductive substrate forming a planar surface that extends radially outward a predetermined distance from the central axis **24** of the diaphragm **14**. Thus, the inner contact **212** may be proximate to the center of the conductive path **210**. The inner contact **212** need not be positioned near or in the center of the conductive path **210**, and instead may be positioned in any location that enables electrical conductivity with the faceplate **12** as described later. The outer contact **214** may be positioned proximate to a perimeter, or outer peripheral edge of the conductive path **210**. In the example shown, the outer contact **214** has an annularly shaped planar surface that substantially surrounds the inner contact **212** and the rest of the conductive path **210**, and provides a conducting surface. In other examples, the outer contact **214** may be any other shape that enables electrical conductivity with the faceplate **12**.

[0032] **FIGS. 3 and 4** are perspective views of an example faceplate **12** that includes an inner terminal **310** and an outer terminal **312**. The inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** may be formed of an electrically conductive material, such as tinned brass. In **FIGS. 3 and 4**, the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** are positioned in the annular wall **20** and a base wall **318** of the faceplate **12**. In one example, during manufacture, the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** may be positioned in a mold into which plastic, or any other molding material, is injected to form the faceplate **12**. Thus, the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** may be molded into the plastic that forms the faceplate **12**, as illustrated in **FIG. 4** with dotted lines. Thus, the faceplate **12** may be formed of a non-conducting material that provides an insulating layer between the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** and the shell pot **18**. As described later, the faceplate **12** may be formed to include a phase plug as illustrated in **FIGS. 3 and 4**.

[0033] **FIG. 5** shows an example of a faceplate **12** that includes the struts **322**, the phase plug **324**, and the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312**. In **FIG. 5**, however, the phase plug **324** does not cover the vibrating portion of the diaphragm **14**. Accordingly, the phase plug **324** in this example is a hub that does not affect the phase of the sound wave generated by the loudspeaker, but still may include/support the inner terminal **312**, and can be used to physically deflect the diaphragm **14** as described later.

[0034] **FIG. 6** is a perspective view of an example inner terminal **310**. The inner terminal **310** includes a termination point **602** and a first contact that is an inner contact **604** electrically coupled with a conductive channel **606**. **FIG. 7** is a perspective view of an example of the outer terminal **312**. The outer terminal **312** includes a termination point **702** electrically coupled with a second contact that is an outer contact **704**. The inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** may be any substantially rigid electrically conducting material of single piece, unitary construction. Alternatively, the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** may be formed with multiple members that are coupled together.

[0035] The termination points **602** and **702** may be positioned to extend away from the faceplate **12**. In **FIGS. 3-5**, the termination points **602** and **702** are positioned in the annular wall **20** substantially parallel with respect to the central axis **24** and the annular wall **20**. Alternatively, the termination points **602** and **702** may be positioned to extend perpendicularly or any other direction with respect to the central axis **24** and the annular wall **20**.

[0036] In one example, the termination points **602** and **702** may include an aperture formed to receive a conductor or some other conduit for electrical signals from a source external to the loudspeaker **10**, such as an audio amplifier. A conductor may be coupled to each of the termination points **602** and **702** with a fusible alloy, such as solder. Alternatively, the termination points **602** and **702** may form or couple a male or female half of a connector, a lug, a compression fitting, or any other form of fastener capable of receiving electrical signals from a source external to the loudspeaker **10**. When formed to be positioned substantially parallel with the central axis **24** and the annular wall **20**, each of the termination points **602** and **702** also may be formed with a predetermined radius of curvature as illustrated in **FIGS. 6 and 7**. The predetermined radius of curvature may be substantially similar to the radius of curvature of the annular wall **20** in the vicinity of where the termination points **602** and **702** are coupled with, and/or embedded in, the annular wall **20**.

[0037] Each of the termination points **602** and **702** may also include a neck portion **608** and **706**. The neck portion **608** and **706** may provide a thermal break to mitigate heat associated with soldering being transmitted into the face plate **12**. In addition, the neck portions **608** and **706** may provide a mechanical flexibility point that allows the termination points **602** and **702** to bend at a predetermined location when subject to forces in excess of a determined magnitude.

[0038] In **FIGS. 3-5**, the base wall **318** of the face plate **12** includes a plurality of struts **322** that extend radially outward from the central axis **24** of the faceplate **12**. The conductive channel **606** of the inner terminal **310** may be embedded in, and/or coupled with one of the struts **322** as best illustrated in **FIG. 4**. The struts **322** may extend between a phase plug **324** and the base wall **318** and/or the annular wall **20**. The inner contact **604** of the inner terminal **310** may also be embedded in and/or coupled with the phase plug **324**. Thus, in some examples, the inner terminal **310** and the outer terminal **312** may be integral with the face plate **12**. If the face plate **12** were formed from plastic, for example, a portion of the inner terminal **310** and the outer terminal **312** may be embedded in the plastic. In other examples, at least some portion of the inner terminal **310** and/or the outer terminal **312** may be coupled to the face plate **12** in other ways, such as with a rivet, a screw, or an adhesive.

[0039] In **FIGS. 1-7**, when the loudspeaker **10** is fully assembled, the inner contact **212** of the conductive path **210** may form an electrical connection with the inner contact **604** of the inner terminal **310**. In addition, the outer contact **214** of the conductive path **210** may form an electrical connection with the outer contact **704** of the outer terminal **312**. The position of the inner contact **604** and the outer contact **704** of the face plate **12** may be aligned to form an electrical connection with the inner contact **212** and the outer contact **214** of the conductive path **210**, respectively.

[0040] In **FIGS. 3-5**, the inner contact **604** of the face plate **12** may be centrally positioned near the center of the face plate **12** while the outer contact **704** of the face plate **12** may be positioned at or near the perimeter of the face plate **12** adjacent an inner surface **320** of the annular wall **20**. This configuration may be axially aligned with the example diaphragm **14** described with reference to FIG. **2**. Due to the configuration of the inner and outer contacts **212** and **214** of the diaphragm **14** and the inner and outer contacts **604** and **704** of the face plate **12**, the need to rotationally orient the diaphragm **14** with respect to the face plate **12** to obtain an electrical connection is unnecessary. The position of the contacts **212**, **214**, **604** and **704** may be different in other examples. For example, where a conductive path **210** is disposed on each side of the diaphragm **14**, all of the contact points may be near the peripheral edge of the diaphragm **14**. Accordingly, the position of the inner contact **604** and the outer contact **704** of the face plate **12** may vary depending upon the position of the inner contact **212** and the outer contact **214** of the conductive path **210**.

[0041] The contiguous positioning of the respective inner and outer contacts **212** and **214** of the conductive path **210** and the respective inner and outer contacts **604** and **704** of the face plate **12** may result in a low resistance conductive path therebetween. Low resistance electrical conductivity may also be enhanced, obtained, and/or maintained using a compliant electrical interface (not shown). The compliant electrical interface may be a conductive spring, a conductive fuzz button, or any other substantially deformable conductive material with memory that allows the compliant electrical interface to substantially return to its original shape. In one example, the compliant electrical interface may be a stainless steel or beryllium copper spring made with about 0.08 mm wire that is about 5 mm long. The compliant electrical interface may be positioned on the contacting surface of one or more of the inner and/or outer contacts **212** and **214** of the conductive path **210** and/or the inner and/or outer contacts **604** and **704** of the terminals **310** and **312**.

[0042] When the loudspeaker **10** is assembled, the one or more compliant electrical interfaces may be compressed between the contacts **212** and **604** and/or **214** and **704** to form a low resistance conductive path therebetween. In another example, one or more of the contacts **212**, **214**, **604** and **704** may protrude outwardly towards each other, and may be deformable with memory to ensure a low resistance signal path. In still other examples, a conductive grease, such as that sold under the name Tecknit Conductive Grease by Tecknit, Inc. of Cranford, N.J. may be used between the respective inner contact **604** or the outer contact **704** of the face plate **12** and the respective inner contact **212** or the outer contact **214** of the conductive path **210** to maximize conductivity and to also serve as a moisture barrier.

[0043] The direct electrical contact between the face plate **12** and diaphragm **14** eliminates the use of external wires for an electrical connection. This reduces the number of components required to complete assembly of the loudspeaker **10** and the labor costs attendant with assembling such external wires. Additionally, this type of direct contact enables the automation of the assembly process. The direct connection also eliminates soldering equipment to complete the electrical connection. Therefore, the environmental and corrosion issues associated with solder and heat effects of soldering on or near plastic components also may be eliminated. Additionally, the direct connection may eliminate a common failure of loudspeakers, particularly tweeters, with flexible lead wires, when the lead wires eventually vibrate loose and/or break and an electrical connection is lost.

[0044] Termination points **602** and **702** of the inner terminal **310** and the outer terminal **312** may conduct an electrical signal, such as an audio signal. The electrical signal can therefore be transmitted to the conductive path **210** of the diaphragm **14**. In another example, the outer contact **214** of the diaphragm **14** may be lengthened to form a terminal that extends outward beyond the annular wall **20** of the face plate **12**. In this example, the outer terminal **312** may be omitted since a conductor providing an electrical signal, such as an audio signal, may be terminated directly to the outer contact **214**. In yet another example, the shell pot **18** may be electrically connected with the outer contact **214**, and a conductor terminated to the shell pot **18** may provide an electrical signal, such as an audio signal, via the shell pot **18** to the conductive path **210** of the diaphragm **14**.

[0045] As the magnitude of the current in the electrical signal supplied to the loudspeaker **10** changes, the interaction of the conductive path **210** of the diaphragm **14** with the magnetic field produced by the magnet **16** will cause the diaphragm **14** to vibrate and produce sound. The directivity of the sound produced by the loudspeaker **10** may be controlled with a phase plug.

[0046] **FIG. 8** is a perspective view of a loudspeaker **10** that includes a faceplate **12** having an integrally formed phase plug **802**. **FIGS. 1, 3** and **4** depict other examples of integrally formed phase plugs. In **FIG. 8**, the face plate **12** also includes a tapered surface of a base wall **804**, and a plurality of struts **806** coupled between the base wall **804** and the phase plug **802**. The tapered surface of the base wall **804** may extend with a predetermined slope from the annular wall **20** toward the central axis **24** and form a wave guide. The phase plug **802** may include a tapered surface **808** that is generally frusto-conically shaped with a predetermined slope that also forms a wave guide. The wave guides may determine a polar pattern of the sound waves produced when the diaphragm **14** is vibrated. The predetermined slope of the tapered surface **808** may extend away from the central axis **24** toward the annular wall **20**. The combination of the tapered surface of the base wall **804** and the tapered surface **808** of the phase plug **802** may form a trough and the radiating opening **26** at, or near, the bottom of the trough.

[0047] The radiating opening **26** in the face plate **12** may have various geometric configurations depending upon the desired performance of the loudspeaker **10**. The configuration of the radiating opening **26** may be dependent on the positioning and shape of the base wall **804** and the phase plug **802**. In other examples, the base wall **804** and the phase plug **802** may be formed and/or positioned in any desirable geometric configuration to produce one or more radiating openings **26** and resulting sound wave directivity(s). In another example, an acoustic lens (not shown) may be used in conjunction with and/or may be a unitary part of the face plate **12**, and/or integrally formed in the face plate **12**. A discussion of suitable acoustic lens designs can be found in co-pending application Ser. No. 10/768,283 entitled Acoustic Lens System, filed on Jan. 29, 2004, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

[0048] **FIG. 9** is a side cutaway view of the example loudspeaker **10** depicted in **FIG. 8**. The loudspeaker **10** includes a face plate **12**, a diaphragm **14**, a magnet **16** and a shell pot **18**. As previously discussed, the changing current of electrical signals applied to the terminals **310** and **312** of the loudspeaker **10** causes vibration of the diaphragm **14** to produce sound. The sound waves may emanate from the radiating opening **26** and be directed with the wave guides (the tapered surface of the base wall **804**, and the tapered surface **808**). Vibration of the diaphragm **14** is enabled by suspending at least a portion of the diaphragm **14** in an air space. The air space may be formed between the magnet **16** and the faceplate **12** to be at least about 0.3 mm to about 0.4 mm. In some examples, a mechanical standoff, such as a spacer (not shown) may be provided between the magnet **16** and diaphragm **14** to provide clearance for the unobstructed vibration of the diaphragm **14**.

[0049] In the example shown in **FIG. 9**, however, no mechanical standoff is employed to provide clearance for the movement of the diaphragm **14**. Instead, the diaphragm **14** may be distorted or changed from a planar surface into a substantially conically shaped surface. For example, during manufacture, the perimeter of the diaphragm **14** may be coupled with the rim **28** of the shell pot **18** in a neutral tension. The rim **28** may lie in a single longitudinal plane and extend around an outer periphery of the shell pot **18**. When the diaphragm **14** is coupled with the rim **28**, the diaphragm **14** may form a planar surface that is coplanar with the longitudinal plane of the rim **28**. The diaphragm **14** may be coupled with the rim **28** of the shell pot **18** with adhesive, compression between opposed surfaces, fasteners, or any other coupling mechanism.

[0050] A component on the opposite side of the diaphragm **14** from the magnet **16** may be positioned with a raised surface of the component against the diaphragm **14**. An apex of the raised surface may contact the diaphragm to force an area of the diaphragm **14** to be deflected or displaced outside of the plane defined by the rim **28** and the perimeter of the diaphragm **14**. In other words, a portion of the diaphragm **14**, such as a central area of the diaphragm **14**, may be displaced to be moved out of one plane and reside in a second plane, or planes, that are different than the plane that the perimeter of the diaphragm **14** resides in. Accordingly, at least a portion of the surface of the diaphragm **14** may be uniformly or non-uniformly tapered in an area between the outer peripheral edge of the diaphragm **14** and the central axis **24**.

[0051] In **FIG. 9**, the component is the faceplate **12**, and the inner contact **604** may be the raised portion used to deflect a portion of the diaphragm **14** to form the diaphragm **14** in a conical shape. In other examples, the diaphragm **14** may be displaced at other than a central area. In addition, in other examples, a mechanical standoff, ridges on the faceplate **12**, or any other mechanism may be used to deflect at least a portion of the diaphragm **14** to form the conical shape. In still other examples, the diaphragm **14** may be coupled with the magnet **16** and/or the faceplate **12**, and the shell pot **18** may be used to deflect the diaphragm **14** into a conical shape. In still other examples, the faceplate **12** may include an inner surface and an outer surface that are coupled with the diaphragm **14** to deflect and form at least a portion of the diaphragm **14** into a conical shape.

[0052] In the example shown in **FIG. 9**, the phase plug **802** with the inner contact **604** coupled thereto may be used to not only deflect the diaphragm **14** into a generally conical shape, but also sandwich the diaphragm **14** between the contact **604** and the magnet **16** to maximize electrical conductivity between the inner contact **212** (**FIG. 2**) on the diaphragm **14**, and the inner contact **604** included in/on the faceplate **12**. In **FIG. 9**, the phase plug **802** includes a first surface, which is the tapered surface **808**, and an opposing second surface, which is a phasing geometry surface **902**. The phasing geometry surface **902** generally faces the diaphragm **14** and the magnet **16** when the loudspeaker **10** is assembled.

[0053] The phasing geometry surface **902** may be a bottom surface and may be tapered such that the contact area between the phase plug **802** and the diaphragm **14** is less than the total surface area of the phasing geometry surface **902**. The taper of the phasing geometry surface **902** may create an angle between the phasing geometry surface **902** and the magnet **16**, such as in the range of about 1 degree to about 5 degrees. The angle may result in a predetermined clearance, such as about 0.3 mm to about 1.5 mm in which the diaphragm **14** may freely vibrate. The taper of the phasing geometry surface **902** may be such that the phasing geometry surface **902** is substantially parallel with, and spaced away, from the substantially conically shaped portion of the adjacently positioned diaphragm **14**. In addition, due to the substantially conical shape of the diaphragm **14**, the surface of the magnet **16** adjacent the diaphragm **14** may also be spaced away from the diaphragm **14**.

[0054] A portion of a first side of the diaphragm **14** may be suspended over an air gap **904** formed between an inner surface **906** of the shell pot **18** and a surrounding peripheral surface **908** of the magnet **14**. Due to the deflection of the diaphragm **14** and the resulting conical shape thereof, a clearance also may be developed between the diaphragm **14** and a portion of the base wall **804** that overhangs a second side of the diaphragm **14** opposite the first side. The portion of the base wall **804** is a phasing geometry surface **910**. The phasing geometry surface **902** and the phasing geometry surface **910** may cooperatively operate phasing of the sound wave produced by the loudspeaker. The radiating opening **26** is also adjacent the second side of the diaphragm **14**. Thus, the diaphragm **14** may vibrate unimpeded between the outer periphery of the diaphragm **14** and the contact point created between the inner contact **212** of the diaphragm **14** and the inner contact **604** of the inner terminal **310**. In some examples, the ratio between the area of the diaphragm **14** that may freely vibrate and the area of the radiating opening **26** may be in a range between about 2:1 and about 8:1. In other examples, the ratio of areas may be in a range between about 1:1 (no phase plug covering a radiating portion of the diaphragm **14**) and about 8:1. In still other examples, the ratio of the areas may be in a range between about 1.5:1 and about 2.5:1.

[0055] In another example configuration, the surface of the magnet **16** that is next adjacent the diaphragm **14** may be formed to include a tapered or sloped surface to increase the airspace in which the diaphragm **14** can freely vibrate. The surface of the magnet **16** may be tapered such that a first portion of the surface may be in contact with the diaphragm **14**, and a second portion of the surface of the magnet **16** may slope away from the diaphragm **14**. In other examples, the second portion of the surface of the magnet **16** may be notched, stepped, slotted or otherwise moved out of a plane in which the first portion of the surface lies in order to increase the airspace in which the diaphragm **14** can vibrate. One surface of the magnet **16** may be next adjacent the diaphragm **14**, and an opposite surface of the magnet **16** may be contiguous and parallel with shell pot **18**. In one example, a first portion of the surface of the magnet **16** next adjacent to the diaphragm **14** may be parallel with the surface of the magnet **16** contiguous with the shell pot **18**, while a second portion of the surface of the magnet **16** next adjacent the diaphragm **14** may be formed in a plane that is not parallel with the second surface. The second portion of the surface of the magnet **16** next adjacent the diaphragm **16** may be tapered, sloped, notched, etc.

[0056] In **FIG. 9**, the shell pot **18** may include an annular rib **912**. The rib **912** may be formed to surround a portion of the surrounding peripheral surface **908** of the magnet **16** to reduce lateral movement of the magnet **16** with respect to the central axis **24**. In addition, or alternatively, adhesives, fasteners, compression, friction fit or any other holding mechanism(s) may be employed to reduce lateral movement of the magnet **16**. The magnet **16** also may be held in place using other techniques, such as those described in application Ser. No. 10/942,179 entitled Magnet Retention System in Planar Loudspeaker, filed on Sep. 16, 2004, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference. In some examples, the shell pot **18** may be a magnetically conductive material, such as steel to attract and maintain the position of the magnet **16** with respect to the shell pot **18**.

[0057] **FIG. 10** is a perspective view of an example shell pot **18**. The shell pot **18** includes the annular rib **912** formed in a floor **1002** of the shell pot **18**. The rib **912** in combination with the floor **1002** may form a recess to accommodate and engage a portion of the magnet **16**. In **FIG. 10**, the rib **912** extends substantially perpendicularly away from the floor **1002**. In another example, the floor **1002** may be formed with a recess in which the rib **912** is a portion of the floor **1002** and forms an outer boundary of the recess. The floor **1002** may radially extend to an annular wall **1004** formed perpendicular to the floor **1002**. The annular wall **1004** is formed to include a rim **28**. As previously discussed, the rim **28** is formed to be coupled with a peripheral edge of the diaphragm **14**. The rim **28** may be integrally formed as part of the annular wall **1004**, or may be a unitary part of the annular wall **1004**. An outer surface **1006** of the annular wall **1004** may include a notch **1008** as best illustrated in **FIGS. 1 and 9**. The notch **1008** may be formed by tapering a portion of the outer surface **1006** of the annular wall **1004** that is near and/or part of the rim **28**. The notch **1008** may circumferentially extend around the periphery of the shell pot **18**. In another example, the rim **28** may be formed to extend beyond the annular wall **1004** to form the notch **1008**.

[0058] **FIG. 11** is an exploded view of the loudspeaker assembly **10**. As previously discussed, the inner terminal **310** and the outer terminal **312** may be a unitary part of, and/or integrally formed in the face plate **12**. Alternatively, as illustrated in **FIG. 11**, the inner and outer terminals **310** and **312** may be coupled with a base wall **1102** and an annular wall **1104**. The combination of the base wall **1102** and the annular wall **1104** may form a housing that is the face plate **12**. To assemble the loudspeaker **10**, the magnet **16** may be secured in a cavity **1106** formed within the shell pot **18**. For example, the rib **912** (**FIG. 9**) in the shell pot **18** may be used to fix the position of the magnet **16**.

[0059] The perimeter of the diaphragm **14** may be attached to the rim **28** of the shell pot **18**, such as by using adhesive, to form a cover over the cavity **1106**. By sliding the face plate **12** over the shell pot **18**, the clips **30** may engage the rim **28** of the shell pot **18** and lock in place as best illustrated in **FIG. 9**. Additionally, the phase plug **802** (**FIG. 9**) and/or the inner contact **604** of the face plate **12** may be used to distort the diaphragm **14**. Since the outer contact **214** of the diaphragm **14** may surround a peripheral edge of the diaphragm **14**, and the inner contact **212** may be substantially centrally located, to create an electrical connection, only axial alignment is necessary when the face plate **12** is slid over a portion of the shell pot **18**.

[0060] **FIG. 12** is an example process for manufacturing the planar loudspeaker **10** that is described with reference to **FIGS. 1-11**. At block **1202**, the magnet **16** is inserted into the cavity **1106** formed in the shell pot **18**. The magnet **16** may be held in position in the shell pot **18** with the annular rib **912**. At block **1204**, the diaphragm **14** is positioned to cover an entrance to the cavity **1106**, and a perimeter of the diaphragm **14** is coupled with the rim **28** of the shell pot **18**. When initially coupled to the rim **28**, the planar surface of the diaphragm **14** is substantially coplanar with the longitudinal plane formed by the rim **28**. In addition, the planar surface of the diaphragm **14** is substantially parallel with the surface of the magnet **16**. The diaphragm **14** is positioned so that the conductive path **210** included on/in the diaphragm **14** is intersected by the magnetic field produced by the magnet **16**.

[0061] At block **1206**, the face plate **12** is positioned substantially concentric with respect to the shell pot **18** so that the diaphragm **14** is between the shell pot **18** and the face plate **12**. The annular wall of the face plate **12** may be aligned to be outside the rim **28** of the shell pot **18**. At block **1208**, it is determined if the face plate **12** is aligned with the shell pot **18**. Alignment with the shell pot **18** simple involves confirming that the annular wall of the face plate **12** is circumferentially positioned outside of the shell pot **18**.

[0062] As previously discussed, alignment related to electrically coupling the shell pot **18** with the face plate **12** may not be required due to the rotationally independent electrical connection between the terminals **310** and **312** included on the face plate **12**, and the inner and outer contacts **212** and **214** included on the conductive path **210**. In addition, rotational alignment related to engaging the face plate **12** and the shell pot **18** may also be avoided since the clips **30** that may be included on the face plate **12** may be interlocked with the notch **1008** included on the shell pot **18** anywhere around the shell pot **18**. The rotational alignment to engage the face plate **12** and the shell pot **18** may be unnecessary since the notch **1008** is formed around the outside of the entire annular wall of the face plate **12** adjacent to the rim **28** such that engagement of the rim **28** with the clips **30** may occur at any point around the annular wall of the face plate **12**.

[0063] If the face plate **12** and the shell pot **18** are not aligned, the operation returns to block **1206** to reposition the face plate **12** and the shell pot **18** with respect to each other. If the face plate **12** and the shell pot **18** are satisfactorily aligned, at block **1210**, the face plate **12** and/or the shell pot **18** may be moved toward each other so that the clip(s) **30** engage with the notch **1008**. At about the same time, at block **1212**, the inner contact **212** of the conductive path **210** comes into direct contact with the inner contact **604** of the inner terminal **310** to form a low resistance electrical connection therebetween. Also, the outer contact **214** of the conductive path **210** comes into contact with the outer contact **704** of the outer terminal **312** to form a low resistance electrical connection therebetween. As previously discussed, the method could also include the additional step of positioning one or more compliant electrical interfaces on at least one of the inner contacts **212** and **604** and/or the outer contacts **214** and **704** so that the compliant electrical interface is compressed between the respective contacts **212**, **214**, **604** and/or **704**.

[0064] As the face plate **12** and the shell pot **18** are moved toward each other at block **1210**, at block **1214**, only a portion of the diaphragm **14** may be deflected by the apex of a raised area of the phase plug **802** included in the face plate **12**. The raised area of the phase plug **802** may also include the inner contact **604**. The inner contacts **212** and **604** may be held in contact, and/or compressed between the raised area of the phase plug **802** and the surface of the magnet **16**. Since at least a portion of the diaphragm **14** is deflected outside of the longitudinal plane formed with the rim **28**, a portion of the diaphragm **14** is suspended under tension in an airspace, and may vibrate freely. Following deflection, the diaphragm **14** may be generally conically shaped. Since the diaphragm **14** is under tension, the diaphragm is maintained in the air space. In addition, due to the tension, distortion in the sound produced by vibration of the diaphragm **14** may be advantageously reduced.

[0065] The previously described embodiments provide a planar loudspeaker designed to be more economical to manufacture, and yet not compromise the quality of sound waves emitted. By elimination of the need for solder connections within the loudspeaker, and complex and/or labor intensive alignment procedures during the assembly process, assembly efficiency, and quality of assembly may be improved. In addition, due to the decrease in precision to perform alignment and electrical connection when compared to assembly of other loudspeakers, the assembly process may be more easily automated.

[0066] While various embodiments of the invention have been described, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that many more embodiments and implementations are possible within the scope of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is not to be restricted except in light of the attached claims and their equivalents.

We claim:

1. A planar loudspeaker comprising:

a diaphragm including a conductive path with an inner contact positioned proximate to a central axis of the diaphragm and an annular outer contact;

a magnet positioned proximate to the diaphragm such that a magnetic field produced by the magnet intersects the conductive path;

a shell pot dimensioned to receive the magnet; and

a face plate adapted to be coupled to the shell pot, the face plate including a first input terminal with a first contact and a second input terminal with a second contact, the face plate further including a radiating opening positioned between the first contact and the second contact.

2. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, where the outer contact is substantially circular in shape and substantially surrounds the inner contact.

3. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, where the inner contact is substantially concentric with respect to the outer contact.

4. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, where the face plate includes a radiating opening adapted to direct transmission of sound waves, the radiating opening being positioned between the first contact and the second contact.

5. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, where the electrical connection between the first contact and the inner contact is solderless.

6. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, where the electrical connection between the second contact and the outer contact is solderless.

7. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, where the face plate comprises a planar base wall and an annular wall extending from the perimeter of the base wall, the first contact and the second contact being substantially coplanar with the base wall.

8. The planar loudspeaker of claim 1, further comprising a compliant electrical interface compressibly disposed between at least one of the first contact and the inner contact or the second contact and the outer contact.

9. A planar loudspeaker, comprising:

a diaphragm that comprises a conductive path having an inner contact and an outer contact;

a magnet positioned proximate to the diaphragm such that a magnetic field produced by the magnet intersects the conductive path;

a shell pot dimensioned to receive the magnet; and

a face plate adapted to be coupled to the shell pot, the face plate comprising a first input terminal that includes a first contact and a second input terminal that includes a second contact,

where the first contact is positioned on the face plate such that at least a portion of the first contact is aligned with at least a portion of the inner contact to form an electrical connection between the first contact and the inner contact, and

where the second contact is positioned on the face plate such that at least a portion of the second contact is aligned with at least a portion of the outer contact to form an electrical connection between the second contact and the outer contact.

10. The planar loudspeaker of claim 9, where the first contact is positioned on the face plate such that at least a portion of the first contact directly contacts at least a portion of the inner contact.

11. The planar loudspeaker of claim 10, where the second contact is positioned on the face plate such that at least a portion of the second contact directly contacts at least a portion of the outer contact.

12. The planar loudspeaker of claim 9, where the first input terminal is formed as a unitary part of the face plate.

13. The planar loudspeaker of claim 12, where the second input terminal is formed as a unitary part of the face plate.

14. The planar loudspeaker of claim 9, where the first contact of the first input terminal is positioned on the face plate proximate to a central axis of the face plate.

15. The planar loudspeaker of claim 14, where the second contact of the second input terminal is positioned on the face plate proximate to a perimeter of the face plate.

16. A planar loudspeaker, comprising:

a diaphragm including a conductive path with an inner contact and an outer contact;

a magnet positioned proximate to the diaphragm such that a magnetic field produced by the magnet intersects the conductive path;

a shell pot dimensioned to receive the magnet; and

a face plate adapted to be coupled to the shell pot,

where only a portion of the face plate is dimensioned to contact the diaphragm such that a portion of the diaphragm is displaced below a planar surface defined by a perimeter of the diaphragm.

17. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where the portion of the diaphragm that is displaced comprises a conical shape.

18. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where at least a portion of the inner contact is displaced below the planar surface defined by the perimeter of the diaphragm.

19. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where the face plate comprises a first contact adapted to directly contact the inner contact, the face plate being configured such that the first contact displaces at least part of the inner contact to be outside of the planar surface defined by the perimeter of the diaphragm.

20. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where the face plate is operable to move the portion of the diaphragm into contact with the magnet.

21. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where the face plate comprises a tapered surface, and an apex of the tapered surface contacts the diaphragm.

22. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where the tapered surface forms a predetermined angle with an adjacently positioned surface of the magnet.

23. The planar loudspeaker of claim 16, where the face plate further comprises a conductive inner terminal that is directly in contact with the inner contact, and is configured to receive an audio signal.

24. The planar loudspeaker of claim 23, where the face plate comprises a conductive outer terminal that is directly in contact with the outer contact, and is configured to receive an audio signal.

25. A planar loudspeaker comprising:

a shell pot formed to include a cavity;

a magnet disposed in the cavity;

a diaphragm formed with a planar surface, the diaphragm coupled with the shell pot to be adjacent to a surface of the magnet, and to cover an entrance to the cavity; and

a face plate coupled with the shell pot, the face plate comprising a phase plug that is operable to contact and deflect only a portion of the diaphragm into contact with the magnet.

26. The loudspeaker of claim 25, where the remainder of the diaphragm is spaced away from the magnet and the face plate, and is configured to freely vibrate.

27. The loudspeaker of claim 25, where the surface of the magnet is a planar surface, and the phase plug includes a raised surface that contacts the diaphragm at an apex of the raised surface.

28. The loudspeaker of claim 25, wherein the shell pot includes a rim that a perimeter of the diaphragm is coupled with, and the portion of the diaphragm is deflected to be outside a longitudinal plane defined by the rim and the perimeter of the diaphragm coupled thereto.

29. The planar loudspeaker of claim 25, where the inner contact of the conductive path is positioned proximate to a central axis of the diaphragm.

30. The planar loudspeaker of claim 29, where the outer contact of the conductive path is positioned proximate to a perimeter of the diaphragm.

31. The planar loudspeaker of claim 30, where the outer contact is substantially annular in shape and substantially surrounds the inner contact.

32. The planar loudspeaker of claim 25, where the surface of the magnet is tapered such that a first portion of the surface is in contact with the diaphragm and a second portion of the surface slopes away from the diaphragm.

33. The planar loudspeaker of claim 25, where the surface of the magnet is a first surface, and the magnet includes a second surface opposite the first surface that is contiguous with the shell pot, where at least a portion of the first surface is formed in a plane that is not parallel with the second surface.

34. A method of manufacturing a planar loudspeaker, the method comprising:

inserting a magnet into a cavity defined by a shell pot;

coupling a diaphragm to the shell pot to cover an entrance to the cavity and to be adjacent the magnet, where the diaphragm includes a conductive path having an inner contact and an outer contact; and

attaching a face plate to the shell pot, where the face plate includes an inner terminal having a first contact electrically conductive with the inner contact and an outer terminal having a second contact that is electrically conductive with the outer contact when the face plate and the shell pot are attached.

35. The method of claim 34, where attaching the faceplate comprises deflecting a portion of the diaphragm toward the magnet with the face plate.

36. The method of claim 35, further comprising forming the deflected portion of the diaphragm into a conical shape.

37. The method of claim 35, where deflecting a portion of the diaphragm comprises pressing against the diaphragm with a raised surface included on the face plate.

38. The method of claim 34, where attaching the face plate comprises engaging a notch included on the shell pot with a clip included on the face plate to latch and interlock the face plate with the shell pot.

* * * * *